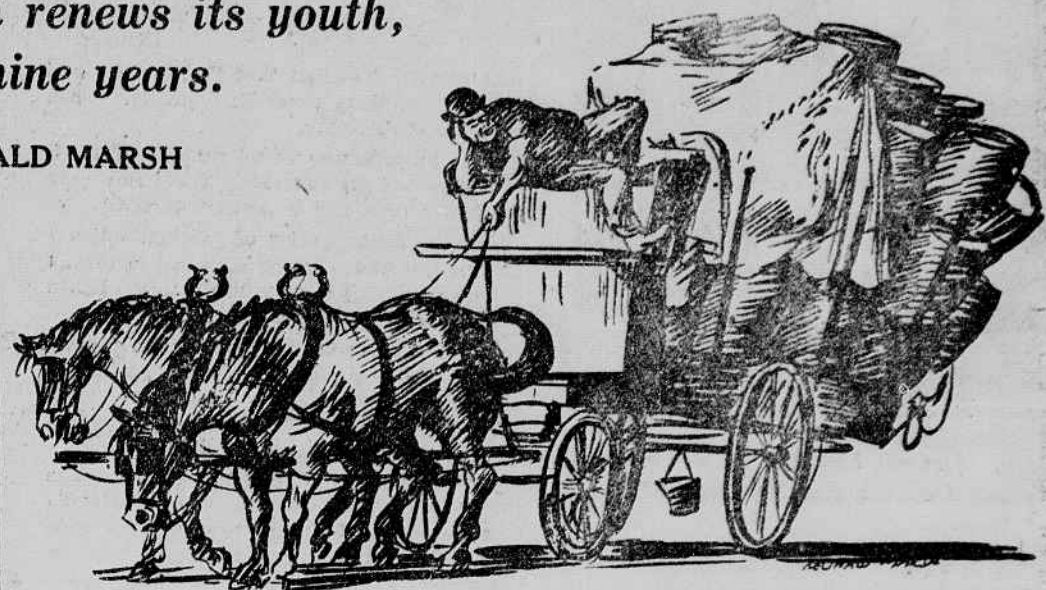
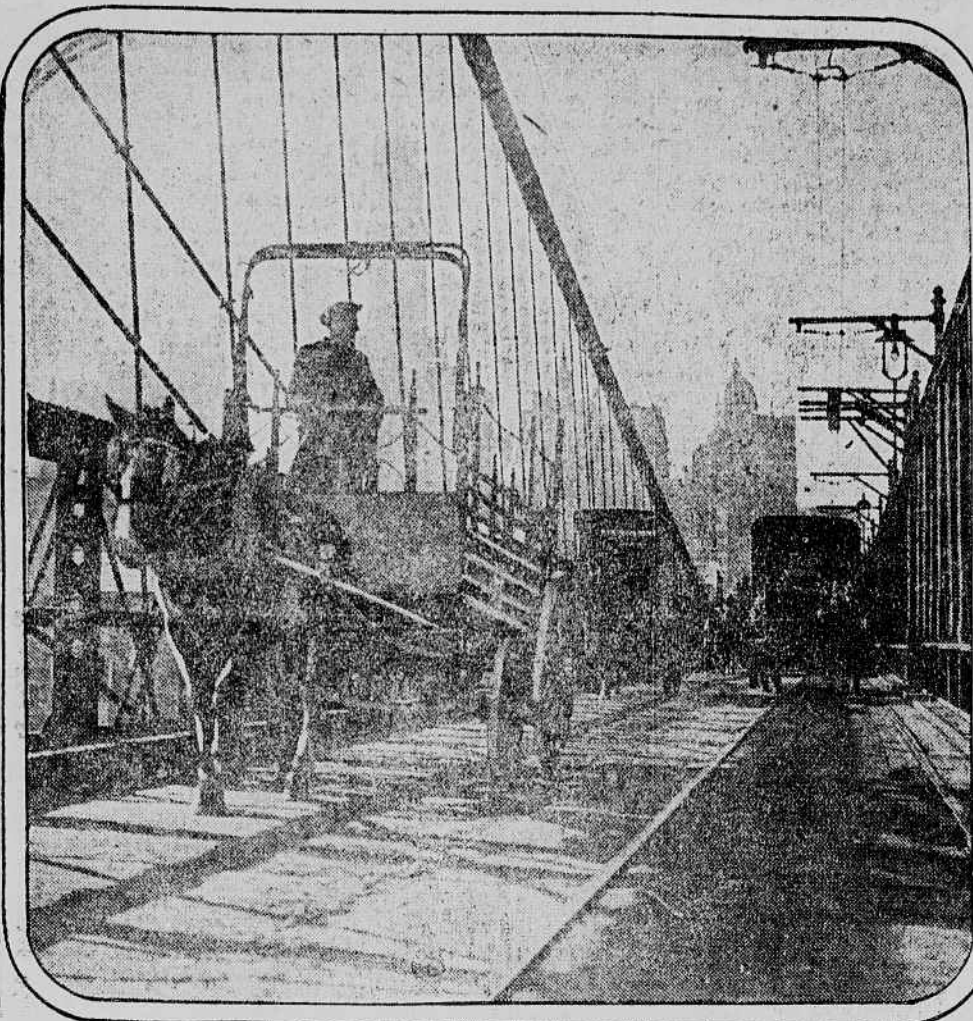


# THE HORSE, LIKE HORATIUS, KEEPS THE BRIDGE

*With the order closing it to autos, the venerable Brooklyn span renews its youth,  
and Father Time turns backward in his flight thirty-nine years.*

By ROBERT B. PECK

Drawings by REGINALD MARSH



**F**ORTY years ago it would have been regarded as an absurdity if any one had suggested that the Brooklyn Bridge might be inadequate to handle the traffic between Manhattan—New York it was then—and Brooklyn. The only question then was whether there ever would be enough traffic on the structure to justify the enormous expense of \$25,000,000 involved in its construction.

Now, with four bridges across the East River, three of them between Brooklyn and Manhattan, it has been found necessary to divert all motor traffic—by far the heaviest part of vehicular traffic—to the other bridges, leaving the plank roadways of the Brooklyn Bridge open only to horse-drawn vehicles.

Even the mail trucks have been barred from Brooklyn Bridge, in spite of the protests of Walter C. Burton, Postmaster of Brooklyn, who says the detour that the vehicles now must make will cost the government more than \$10,000 a year.

Grover A. Whalen, Commissioner of Plant and Structures, who issued the order that restored the youth of the Brooklyn Bridge, eliminating with a stroke of his pen all the years of the gasoline era from its thirty-nine year span of service and bringing about a reversion to the days when leisurely, clumping horses had the roadways to themselves, is certain of the merits of his plan.

## The Lowly Trolley Car Has Some Rights

Concentration of horse-drawn vehicles on Brooklyn Bridge and of motor vehicles on Manhattan Bridge and the Williamsburg Bridge, he believes, serves the interests of trolley passengers, motorists and truck drivers, and is a boon as well to the throng that twice a day sweeps across the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Since 1920 the Brooklyn Bridge has had one-way traffic rules during certain hours of the day, but no restrictions as to the nature of the traffic, except that trucks, both motor-driven and horse-drawn, kept to one roadway and the lighter, swifter vehicles to the other.

Almost half of each roadway is taken up by the surface cars. In 1897 trolley tracks were laid in the roadways and since then surface cars have been contending with trucks for the right of way.

There is barely space between the running board of an open car and the rail of the bridge for one of the big, unwieldy motor trucks. So narrow was the margin of safety that conductors collecting fares on the trip across the bridge had to watch their step vigilantly. Only a few days before the recent order banishing such vehicles went into effect a motor truck swept a conductor from the running board of a car and crushed him to death.

## Motorists Simply Couldn't Stand Going Slow

Any impediment in one of the roadways meant that the vehicles using it had to take to the surface car tracks to get around the obstacle. Whenever a truck broke down on the bridge surface cars had to crawl at a snail's pace in order to give the ceaseless stream of vehicles an opportunity to get around the obstruction. It meant that at the point where the disabled truck stood, motor trucks, horse-drawn trucks and streetcars, all had to squeeze through a ten-foot gap.

Whenever motor trucks found themselves behind a plodding dray their drivers swerved to the car tracks to speed past it, and cars had to slow up or fight it out, and many of the modern motor trucks can withstand a collision fully as well as the average B. R. T. car.

On the roadway devoted to trucking three divergent types of vehicles were constantly clashing—the dray, the motor truck and the surface car. All were running on an eighteen-foot thoroughfare, and the marvel was that there were not a continual series of collisions,

that half the horses which ventured upon the bridge were not maimed or killed.

During the one-way hours, when traffic was streaming westward across the bridge, glistering pleasure cars hummed unceasingly along the south roadway, while the north roadway was jammed with toiling horses, sputtering motor trucks whose heavy wheels ground the planks to splinters beneath their tread and trolley cars, which sometimes crawled and sometimes sped along in a sharp sprint, according to whether the track had been usurped by ponderous trucks or lay clear before them.

## Record for a Single Day Is 26,000 Vehicles

Before the one-way regulations went into effect, in 1919, the average number of motor-driven or horse-drawn vehicles crossing the bridge daily was 6,605. This year, with the one-way regulations in effect, it was said by an official in position to know, although he did not have the figures at hand, that the record for twenty-four hours was about 26,000. The exact figures were refused by Commissioner Whalen at the time this article was written.

Owing to the Commissioner's unwillingness to make the figures public until he had compiled them for a definite period, it is impossible to say what the daily record is now that only horse-drawn vehicles are allowed on the bridge. The decrease in traffic is tremendous, however, and offers visible evidence of the decline of the horse.

The old bridge must think it has reverted to the days of its youth, when wisecracks were wondering whether it ever would have traffic enough to warrant the expense of its construction. As a matter of fact, there is probably less vehicular traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge to-day than there was when it was opened with a lot of ceremony in 1883.

In those days it was not only a business thoroughfare, but was something of a boulevard and promenade. It was far more enjoyable and fashionable to roll grandly across the bridge in one's barouche or victoria with

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parasols tilted primly against the sun or coyly against glances of beaux sauntering along the promenade above than to patronize the once

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*"What! Since When? Why Not?"*

luxurious boats of the Fulton Ferry Company. Luxurious and swift as they were once considered, the ferryboats were not always in the slip when the barouche rolled up, and waiting was vexatious. Deprived of their fashionable clientele, the boats became shabbier and slow-

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the later days, when motor trucks rendered the bridge hazardous for horses, a few careful drivers still preferred the old ferry.

Now the scene has changed once more. Brooklyn Bridge is again a thoroughfare for horses. But the plodding beasts which use it now in scanty numbers might almost be of a different species from the glossy, high-stepping animals which pranced across it in its youth, with the jingle of shining buckles and the whirl of swiftly revolving spokes, polished so highly that they reflected the sun in gleaming circles about each hub.

## The Horses of To-day Are Unlike Their Ancestors

Occasionally a venerable victor, rather shabby as to cushions, rather dull as to paint and decidedly discouraged as to horse and driver, would traverse the bridge even of recent days. Where these ancient equipages have been hidden and how their owners have managed to survive is a mystery, the more so as their favorite clients seem to be nuns who are not given to joy rides.

For the most part, however, the horses which use the bridge to-day are shaggy, big-footed, massive-shouldered beasts, injured to the hairbreadth escapes which form the daily round of their lives in this motor-ridden city.

Even the horses seem to have become more or less mechanical. Some of the stolid animals which plod across the bridge look as though their progeny or their progeny's progeny at least might be born with crank shafts protruding from their chests.

You might think that the long vista of the bridge, with its hoof-comforting plank roadway completely devoid of motor cars of any description, would titillate the soul of the most ignoble horse, but there is no evidence of it. There is, in fact, every evidence that the horse that uses the bridge to-day is in an indeterminate state of development where it has neither a soul nor a crank shaft.

Not an ear is pricked as the straggling procession hits the otherwise deserted plank road. Not a head goes up. Not a hoof lifts higher than its wont. Clump, clump, clump, they plod across the bridge, heads bobbing, tails languidly switching. They betray no more interest than under normal conditions

when motor cars are grazing the whiffletrees or shooting from a side street so suddenly as almost to rub the down from their muzzles.

It is all the same to them. Cobble streets, asphalt reeking of gasoline fumes, motors crowding them on every side or the safe seclusion of the Brooklyn Bridge—nothing can arouse fear or enthusiasm. Day in and day out they dribble across the bridge in a procession which probably will dwindle year by year, and even now is far from impressive.

With the horse there may return the ancient anecdote founded upon the sign "Loaded Teams Keep to the Right," which was posted on each roadway in the days when no surface cars crossed the bridge, giving room on each roadway for a double column of teams.

In those days when news was slack and editorial genius dozed it was the habit of the city editors of Brooklyn newspapers to summon the reporters with pomp and ceremony and instruct them to go out and dig up a few humorous stories.

## "Loaded Teams Keep To the Right"

The new reporter receiving the instructions invariably felt that being restricted to "a few," he must select only the best short stories to be found. Invariably at some time in his brief career he had seen and chuckled at the sign "Loaded Teams Keep to the Right," envisioning a pair of riotously spirituous companions rolling home in the early hours of the morning who spied the sign and endeavored conscientiously to obey its command.

Invariably he turned in that anecdote, more or less embellished, and it may still be possible to find a Brooklyn patriarch or two who actually has seen it in print. In its most humorous form the inebriated pair were called Tom and Jerry.

When the count is complete and the figures for vehicular traffic to-day on the bridge are compared with those of yesterday the total for the day probably will be in the hundreds instead of well up in the thousands. There is scarcely an hour of the day when more than twenty or thirty wagons are to be seen on the bridge at one time.

Even if the horses do not appreciate it, there is a certain element of sentiment and picturesqueness in the return of the horse to the Brooklyn Bridge. It is not easy to describe but it may be perceived toward sunset when an occasional driver is taking his team to a Brooklyn stable, leaving his truck on the Manhattan side of the bridge.

Tugs are looped up over the horses' backs and reins doubled in the bit rings as when, one meadow having been cleaned up, the hay wagon was left in the field for the night, preparatory to handling the next day's cut, when the team would be transferred from mowing machine or rake to the hay wagon.

The driver is perched on a bit of sacking on the near horse, rocking a bit to their plodding gait. Blue smoke curls up from his pipe. The day's work is done, yet he is in no hurry. The horses are in no hurry. Clump, clump, clump, they plod contentedly, unweary even by thought, across the bridge.

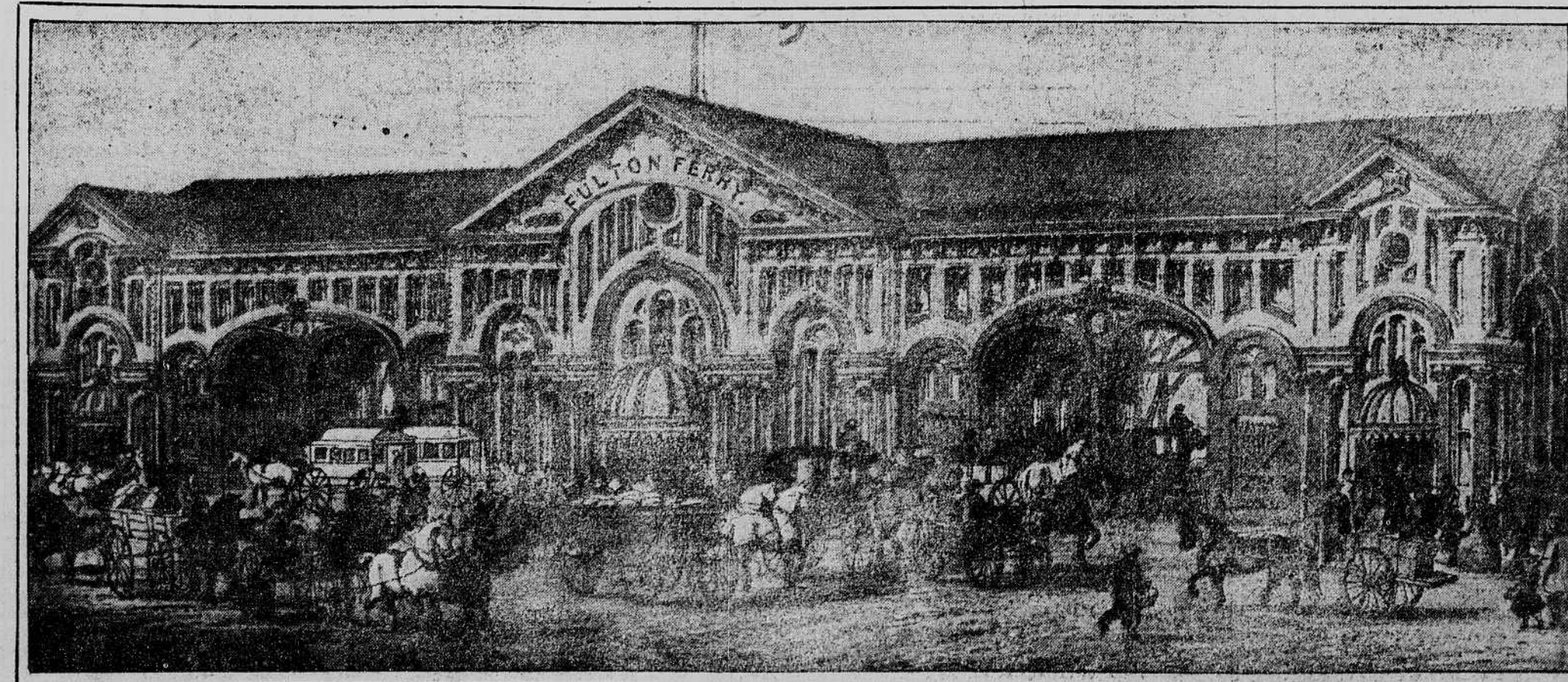
## The Bridge Gets at Last Its Promised Rest

It is far from being the gay scene that characterized the previous horse era, when driving or walking across the Brooklyn Bridge was in the nature of an excursion and refreshment places sprang up with mushroom swiftness at either approach, their signs and placards inviting the wayfarer to stop and sip a leisurely glass, but it has its picturesque points.

Aside from all the advantages to traffic which Commissioner Whalen believes will result from the plan, it has the obvious advantage of removing a great part of the overload from the bridge. The structure was pronounced by experts in 1919 to be stronger than when first built and capable of sustaining a greater load.

Its burden at that time and since then, however, has been far in excess of anything its builders contemplated. A large force of men, directed by skilled engineers, is continually examining and grooming the herd of mighty bridges which span the East River, keeping them in the pink of condition and fretting about their little ills with the affectionate concern of the keepers of a herd of elephants.

They have maintained them at the peak of efficiency and enabled them to handle without risk the increasing burden of traffic. Nevertheless, after almost forty years of continuous service, even a bridge deserves a rest. The Brooklyn Bridge is getting its rest now.



*Horse-drawn vehicles of an earlier day. Fulton Ferry in 1863, twenty years prior to the opening of Brooklyn Bridge. When the bridge was opened it was far more fashionable to roll grandly across in one's barouche or victoria, with parasols tilted against the sun, than to patronize the once luxurious boats of the ferry*